

Weekly checklist

21
days
to 'M-Day'

In one closet or room, start collecting the items you'll take with you in the car or on the airplane. Don't forget military uniforms that will be needed immediately upon arrival. Include summer or winter clothes, as appropriate, for each family member. Separate these items in an area that you can close off when the packers arrive to make sure they're not swept into your shipment.

Be sure to set aside comfort items for your children, said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Roger Loesch, who once drove from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, to Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., on a move.

"Having their favorite toys, movies and a portable DVD [player] made a world of difference," he said.

Gather personal records from doctors, dentists, accountants, schools, lawyers and others.

Give your new address to your current command.

Notify current utilities -electricity, gas, phone, cable, water, Internet - of disconnection dates and your forwarding address. Notify your new utility companies of connection dates.

Consider arranging child care for young children during the packing and loading day. Seeing favorite belongings packed up can be stressful for kids, and you need to be focused on the packing process.

Similarly, have someone care for your pets that day. There are heart-wrenching tales of pets somehow finding their way into packing boxes and onto moving vans.

Have rugs and draperies professionally cleaned; leave them in the cleaners' wrapping.

Make arrangements for where you will stay your last night in town.